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ABSTRACT

Originally prepared by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, for the use of delegates and other participants in the 1980 White House Conference on Families, this chartbook provides a graphic overview of selected, recent family trends reflecting changes in Americans' personal lifesytles. Information and limited commentary are presented on family formation, family dissolution, and living arrangements of the U.S. population. The charts document: attitudes toward family life: trends in fertility: levels of first marriage, divorce and remarriage: changes in living arrangements of adults and children and in family and household makeup: developments in the economic aspects of family life including increases in the number of working mothers, income of families of various types, and trends in homeownership: and a description of the types of families who reside inside or outside of metropolitan areas. (Author/MP)

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# American Families and Living Arrangements

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2

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# Introduction

The past quarter century has produced a remarkable amount of change in nearly every sphere of American life. Recent trends seem to have had an extraordinary impact on the attitudes and values which provide the foundation for social cohesion in the United States. As these cultural patterns undergo revision, social institutions also experience some reshaping. In this process, the family has not been exempt. These developments have altered the way that many households and families are formed, maintained, and dissolved. The charts on the following pages are presented as an illustration of how patterns of change may be perceived through the use of survey and census statistics.

This chartbook was originally prepared by the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, for the use of delegates and other participants in the 1980 White House Conference on Families. It provides a graphic overview of selected recent family trends reflecting changes in the personal lifestyles of many Americans. Information and limited commentary are presented on family formation, family dissolution, and living arrangements of the U.S. population. The charts document: attitudes toward family life; trends in fertility; levels of first marriage, divorce, and remarriage; changes in living arrangements of adults and children and in family and household makeup; developments in the economic aspects of family life including increases in the number of working wives and working mothers, income of families of various types, and trends in homeownership; and a description of families according to residence inside or outside of metropolitan areas.

This report is intended to be only generally descriptive of changes in family living. Much more detailed information on most of the topics presented in the charts and associated areas of interest are available in other Current Population Reports.

**Most Americans place a high value on family life.**

Three of every four adults since 1973 say they find "a very great deal" or "a great deal" of satisfaction with family life.

**One-half of U.S. adults oppose older persons sharing homes with grown children.**

The growing tendency for older persons and their grown children to live apart reflects the finding that one-half of adults think that two generations of adults living together is "a bad idea." A "generation gap" may be involved among many who say it is only "a good idea" or "depends."

**Almost all married people say they have a happy marriage.**

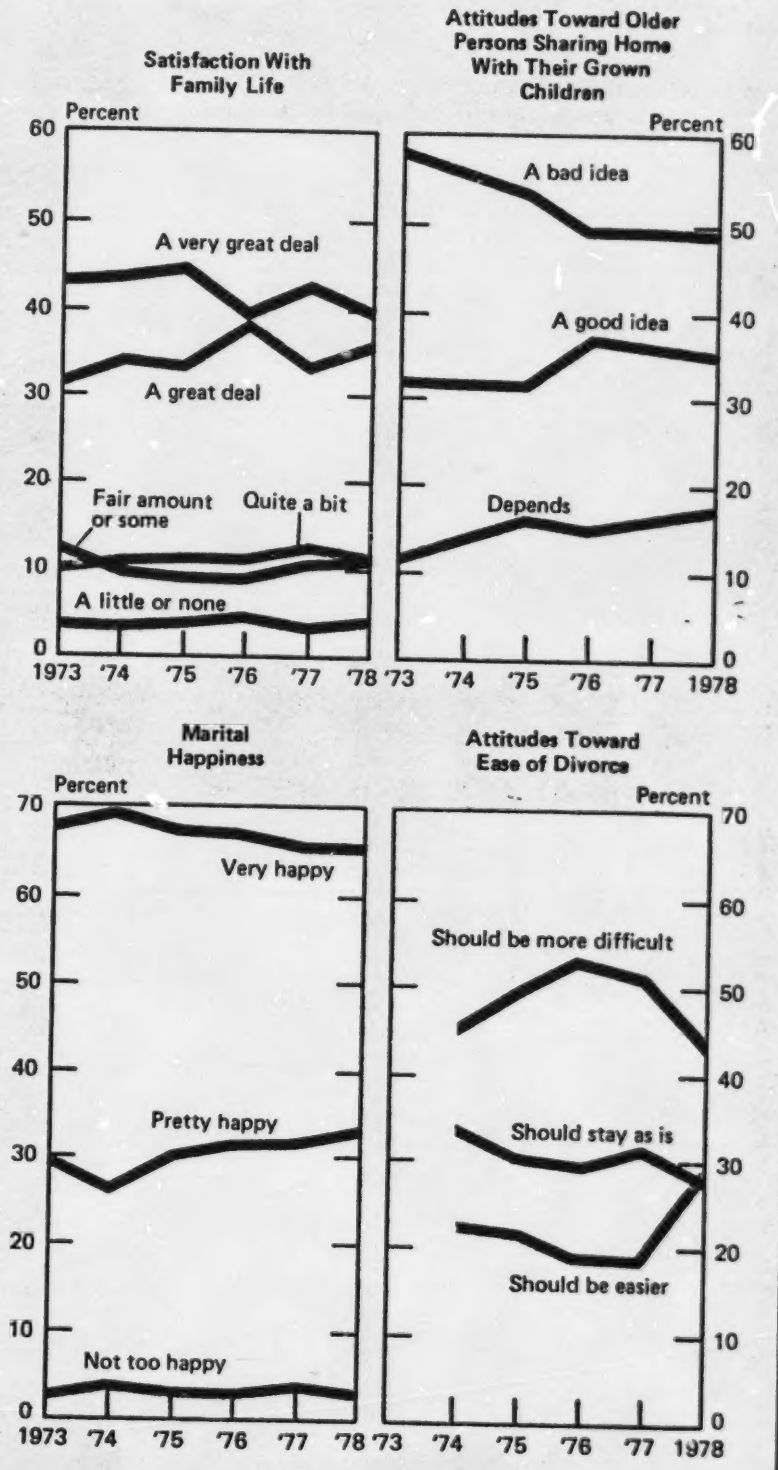
Although two-thirds of married adults report being "very happy," most of the other one-third say they are only "pretty happy" in their marriage. Many of those who were unhappily married apparently have divorced.

**Close to one-half of U.S. adults believe divorce should be more difficult.**

As divorces have become increasingly easy to obtain, a declining proportion of adults say that the ease of obtaining a divorce should stay as it is. Variable proportions say it should be more difficult or less difficult to obtain a divorce.

Chart 1.

**Public Perceptions -- Satisfaction With Family Life, Attitudes Toward Older Persons Sharing Home With Their Grown Children, Marital Happiness, and Attitudes Toward Ease of Divorce: 1973-78**

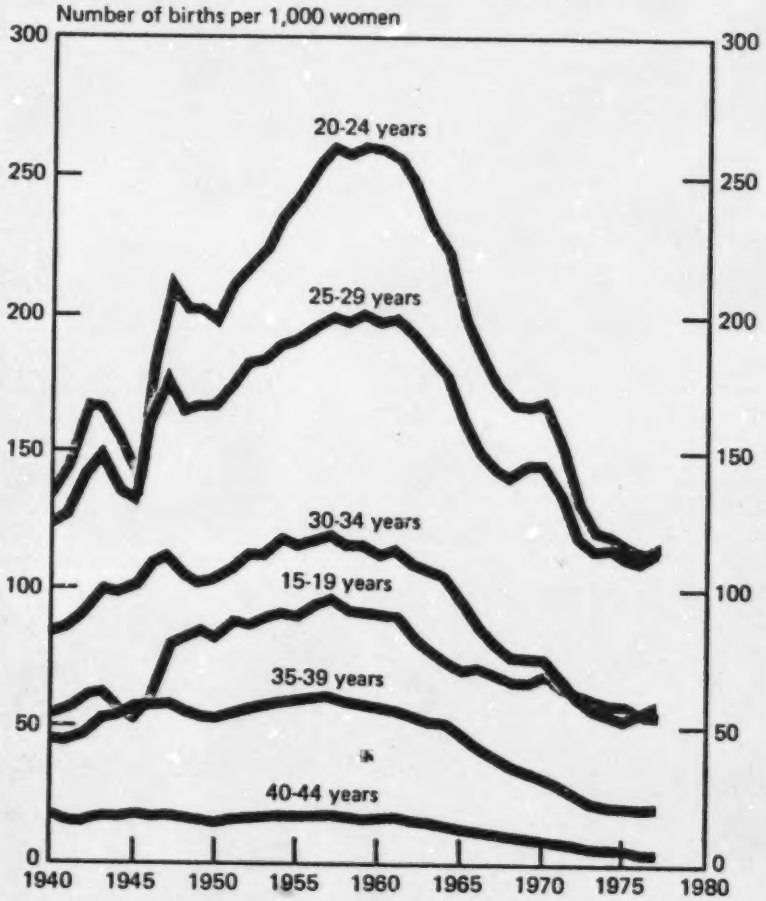



Source: National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago.

**Late childbearing has risen very little.**

After several years of increasing postponement of marriage and childbearing, there is still no increase in the rate of marriage for women in their late twenties and only a very small upturn in the birth rate for women in their early thirties.

Chart 2.
Fertility Rates, by Age of Mother: 1940-77

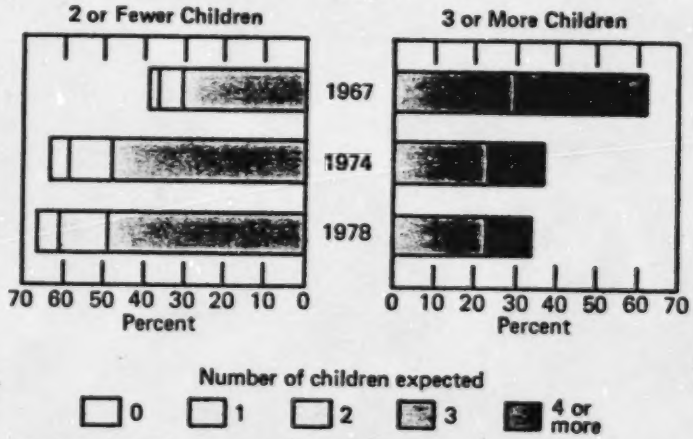



Source: U.S. National Center for Health Statistics.

**Fewer women are expecting to have three or more children.**

The proportion of wives 18 to 34 in 1978 who expected to have three or more children was less than one-half as large as a decade earlier. Six percent now expect to have no children. One in six wives expect to remain childless or to have only one child.

Chart 3.
Lifetime Births Expected by Wives 18 to 34 Years Old, for Selected Years: 1967-78

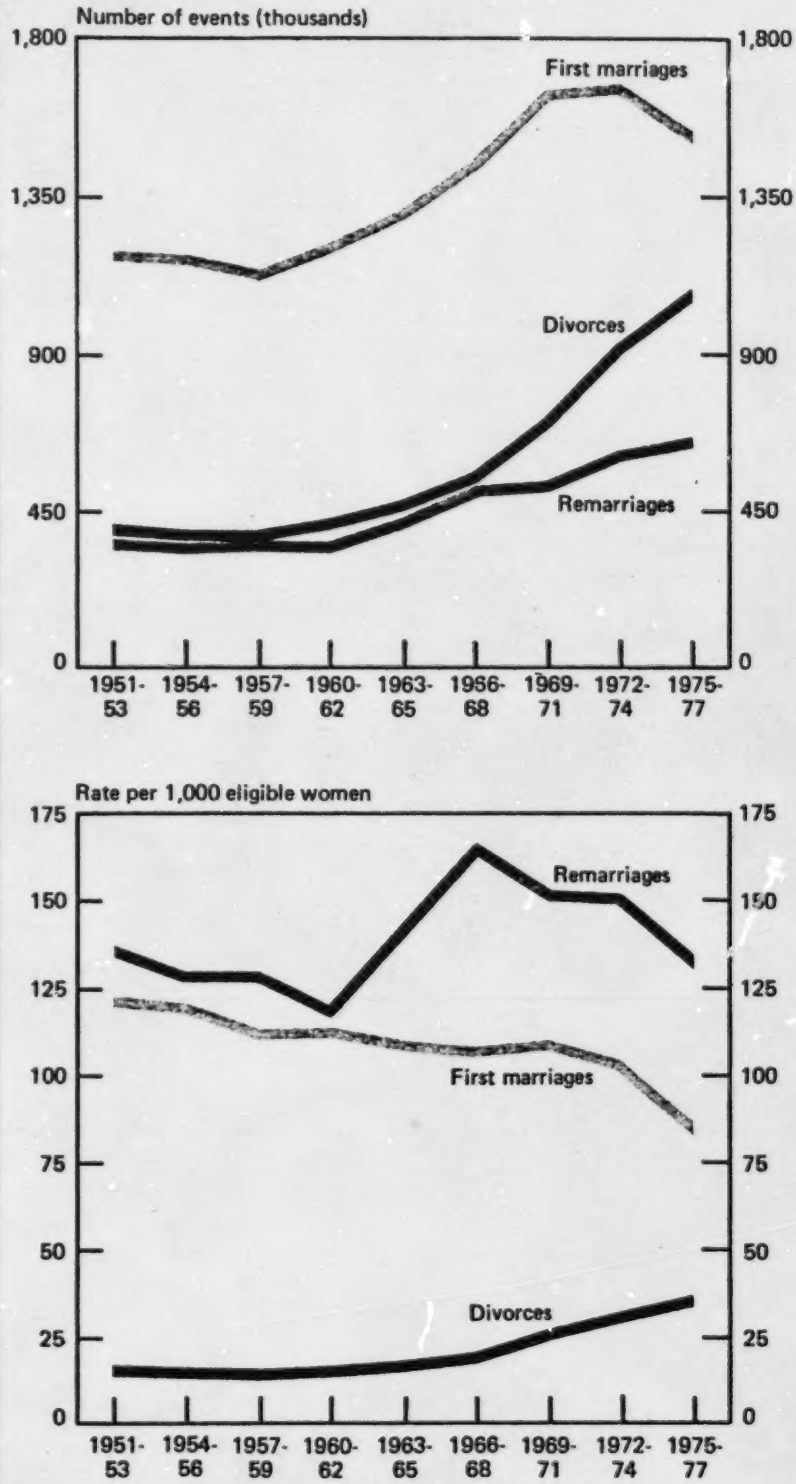



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**First marriage and remarriage decline as divorce rises.**

The number of first marriages rose during the 1960's as persons born during the baby boom reached the average marrying age, but the marriage rate per 1,000 never-married persons continued a longtime downward trend. Divorces surged upward during the 1960's and early 1970's but now the increase has slowed.

Chart 4.
Number and Rate of First Marriages, Divorces, and Remarriages of Women: 1951-77

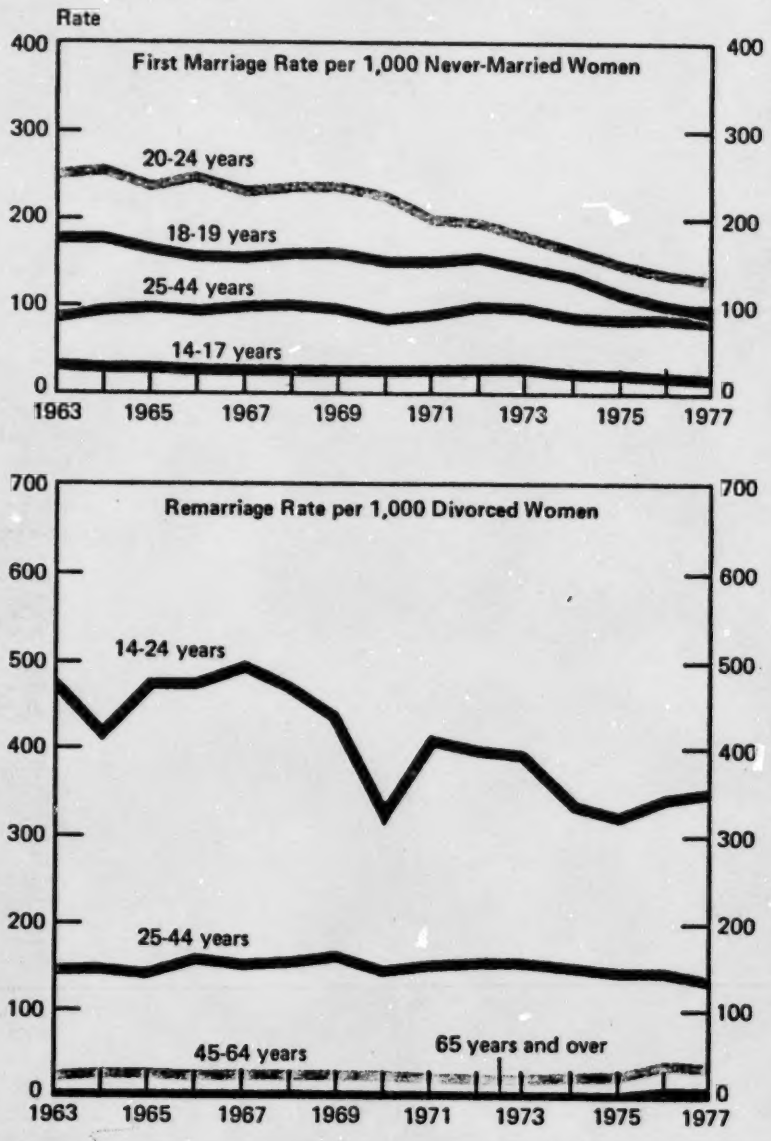



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Decline in marriage is greatest in late teens and early twenties.**

As more young adults continue their education at the college level and as more of them work and establish separate households, more first marriages and also more remarriages after divorce are being postponed at least temporarily.

Chart 5.
First Marriage and Remarriage Rates Among Women, by Age: 1963-77

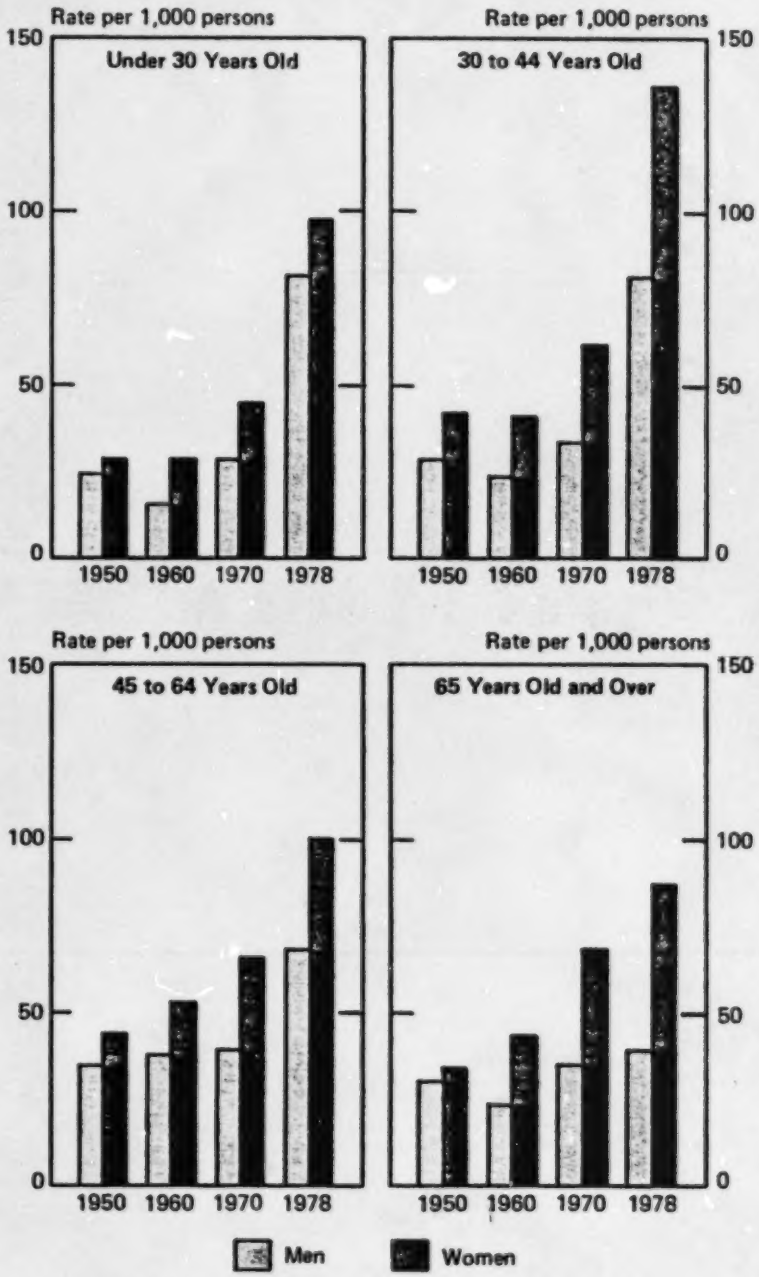



Source: U.S. National Center for Health Statistics.

**The ratio of divorced persons to married persons has increased at each age level.**

The "divorce ratio" has increased most rapidly at ages under 45. Above age 30, the divorce ratio for women has risen more rapidly than that for men, as divorced men continue to have higher remarriage rates than divorced women.

Chart 6.
Divorced Persons Per 1,000 Married Persons With Spouse Present, by Sex and Age, for Selected Years: 1950-78

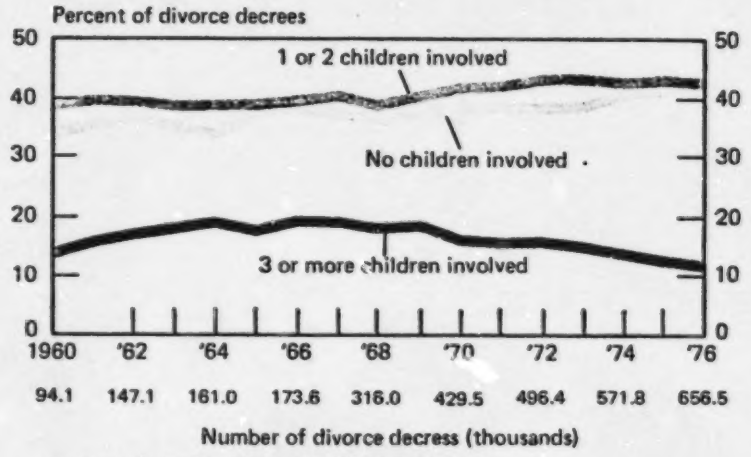



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**More divorces now involve no children or only one or two children.**

As the birth rate has fallen, a declining proportion of divorces has involved three or more children, especially after the mid-1960's. Adults who become divorced find it easier to cope after their marriage is dissolved if few or no children are involved.

Chart 7.
Divorce Decrees Involving Children, by Number of Children: 1960-76

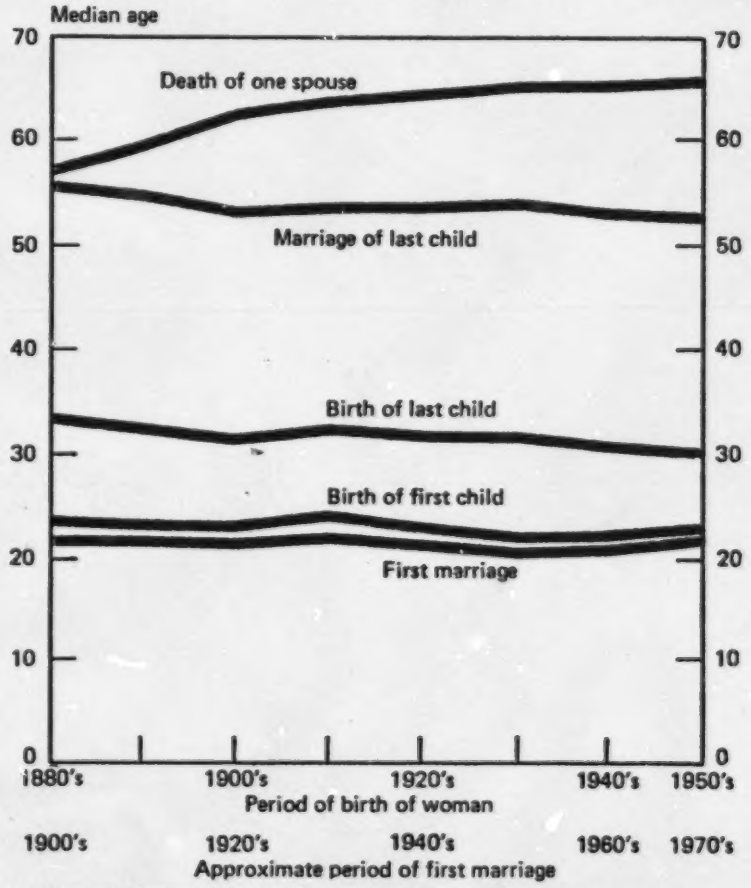



Source: U.S. National Center for Health Statistics.

**Less married life is being spent in childrearing and more after the children leave home.**

Ending childrearing earlier and increasing chances of living past middle age have added greatly to the length of time couples live together with no children in the home. More women in their forties and fifties now work outside the home for personal satisfaction and to maintain or raise living standards. Income per family member is highest during this period.

Chart 8.
Median Age of Mothers at the Beginning of Selected Stages of the Family Life Cycle: 1900-1970

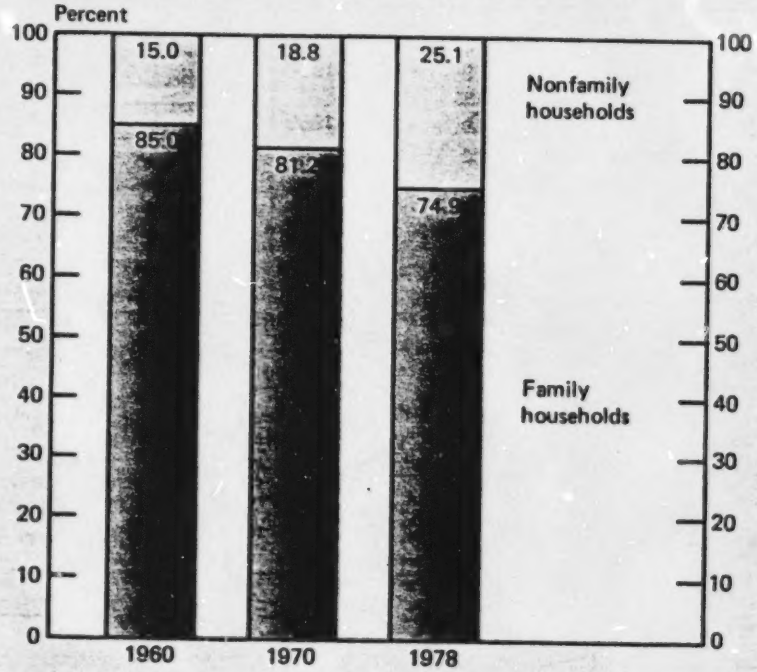



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**One-fourth of all households include no family group.**

As more elderly wives outlive their husbands and as more young adults establish separate homes before marriage or after separation or divorce, a growing number of adults live apart from relatives, usually alone.

Chart 9.
**Family and Nonfamily Households as a Percent of All Households: 1960, 1970, and 1978**

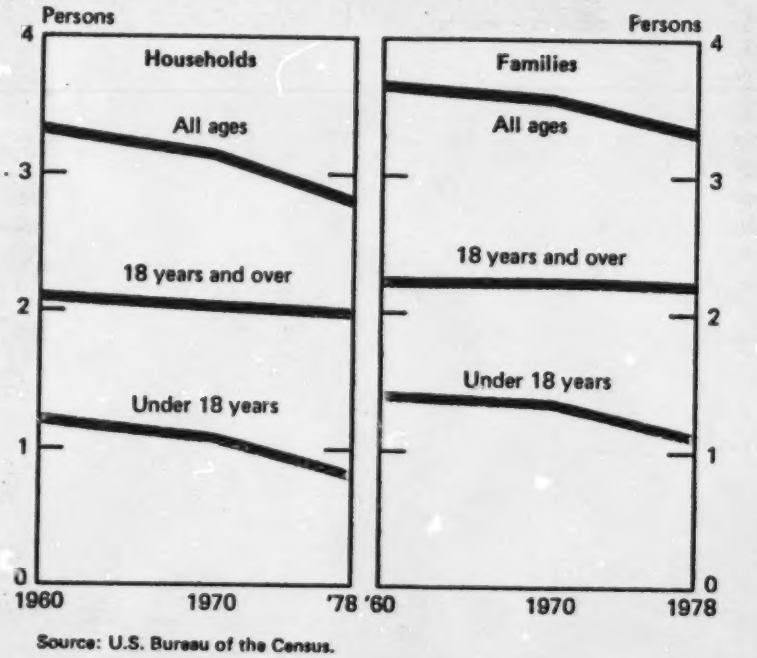



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Declining birth rates cause household and family sizes to shrink.**

Households and families are becoming smaller mainly because the number of young children in the home is diminishing. Increases in the number of persons living alone have caused household size to decline more rapidly than family size.

Chart 10.
**Average Size of Households and Families: 1960, 1970, and 1978**

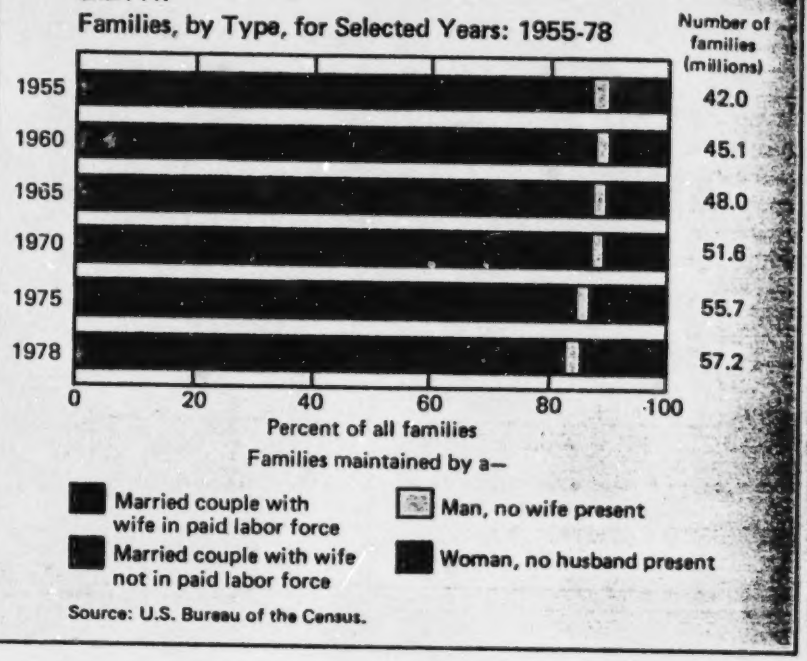



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Families with working wives and those maintained by women have increased rapidly.**

Since the 1950's, a steadily growing proportion of families has included a couple with the wife in the paid labor force. Since 1970, a rapidly growing proportion of families has been maintained by women who are divorced, separated, or never married and who generally have one or more children for whom they have custody.

Chart 11.
Families, by Type, for Selected Years: 1955-78




Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**One-half of married-couple families have no young children in the home.**

Postponement of childbearing and especially the lengthening period of married life after the children leave home account primarily for so many couples with no sons or daughters under 18 living with them at one point in time. Men rarely have custody of children under 6, but one-fourth of the mothers who have sole custody of the children have one or more preschoolers to care for.

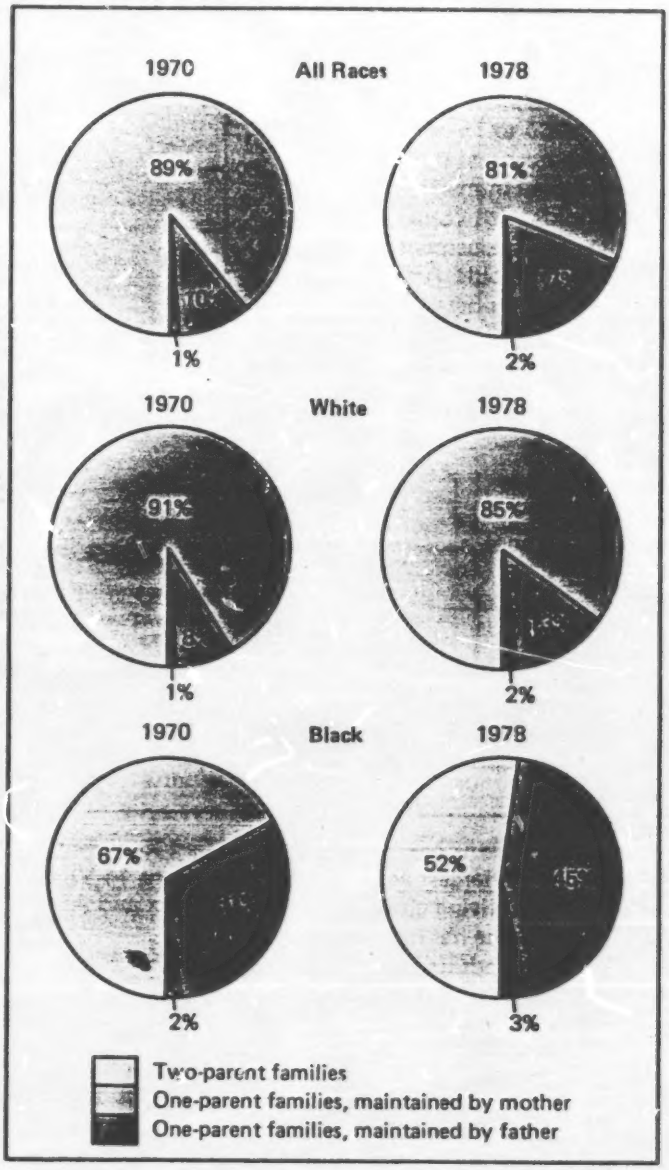
Chart 12.
Types of Families, by Presence of Children Under 18 and 6 Years: 1970 and 1978

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Almost one-half of Black mothers have no husband sharing their home.**

Three times the proportion of Black mothers as White mothers have no husband in the home to help with the nurturing of children. For both groups, the proportion of such mothers was 1½ times as large in 1978 as in 1970.

Chart 13.
One-Parent Families as a Proportion of All Families With Children Present: 1970 and 1978

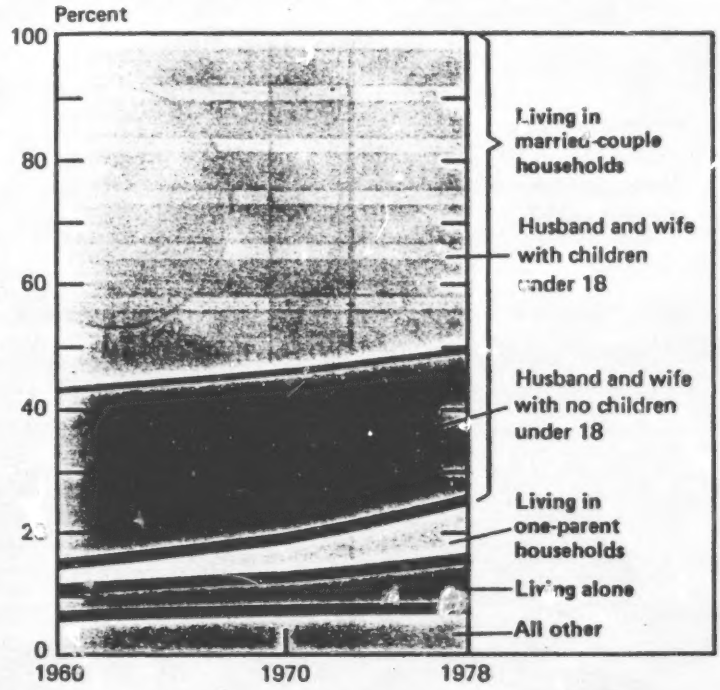



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Despite recent changes, three of every four persons in the United States live in married-couple households.**

This proportion declined from 85 percent in 1960 to 75 percent in 1978. Fifty percent of the 220 million people lived in married-couple households with young children present, and nine percent lived in one-parent households. Among the others, 2.7 million persons in 1978 lived in households of unmarried couple of opposite sex, twice as many as in 1970.

Chart 14.
Living Arrangements of the Noninstitutional Population: 1960, 1970, and 1978

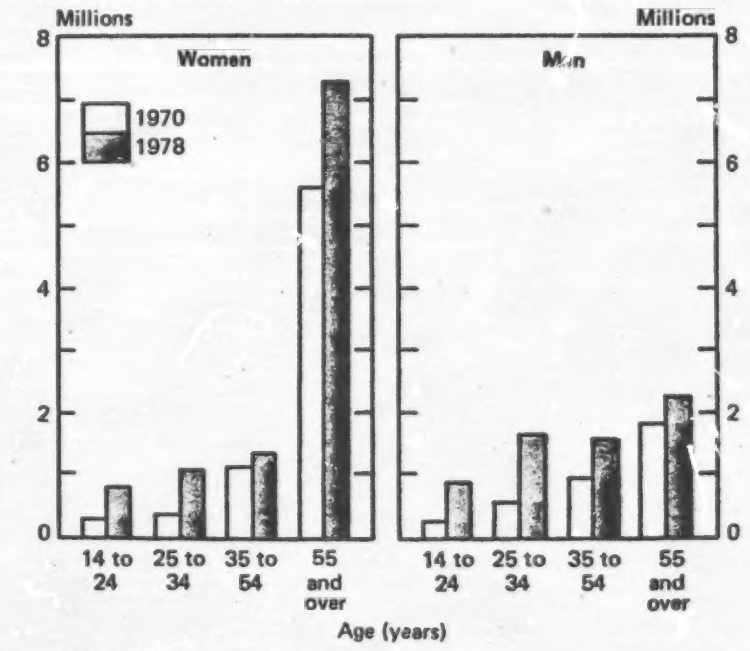



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Older women are the largest age-sex group of persons living alone, but the rate of increase has been fastest among young adults.**

Two of every five persons living alone are women 55 years old or over, but the number of men and women under 35 living alone increased fastest (tripled) between 1970 and 1978, as 3 million more young adults maintained one-person households while separated, divorced, or not yet married.

Chart 15.
Persons 14 Years Old and Over Living Alone, by Sex and Age: 1970 and 1978

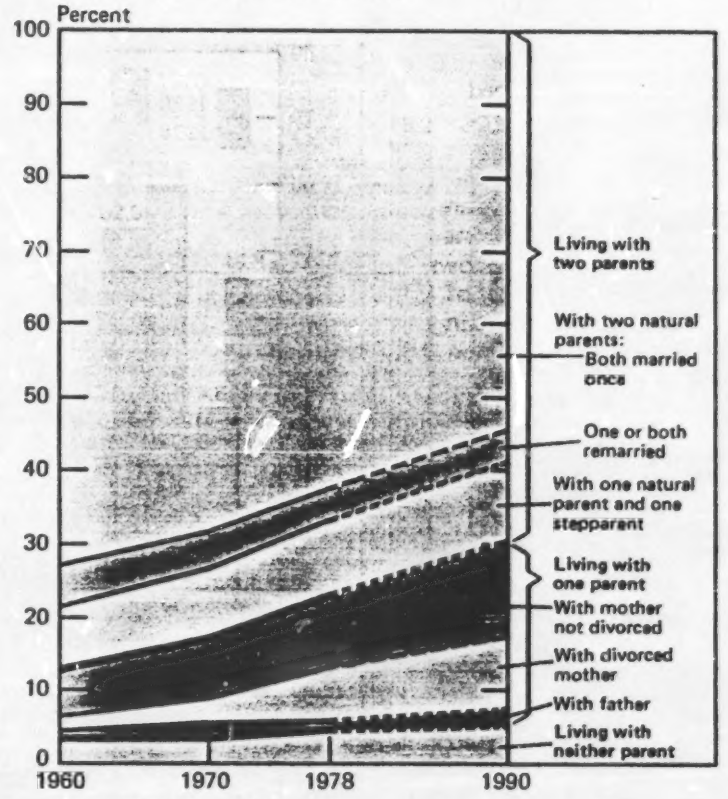



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Ninety-six percent of all children under 18 live with one or both parents.**

However, the proportion living with one parent doubled from 9 percent to 19 percent from 1960 to 1978, while those living with two parents declined from 88 percent to 78 percent. One of every eight children living with two parents lives with a natural parent and a stepparent. Two of every three living with one parent live with a divorced or separated parent.

Chart 16.
**Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old: 1960-90**

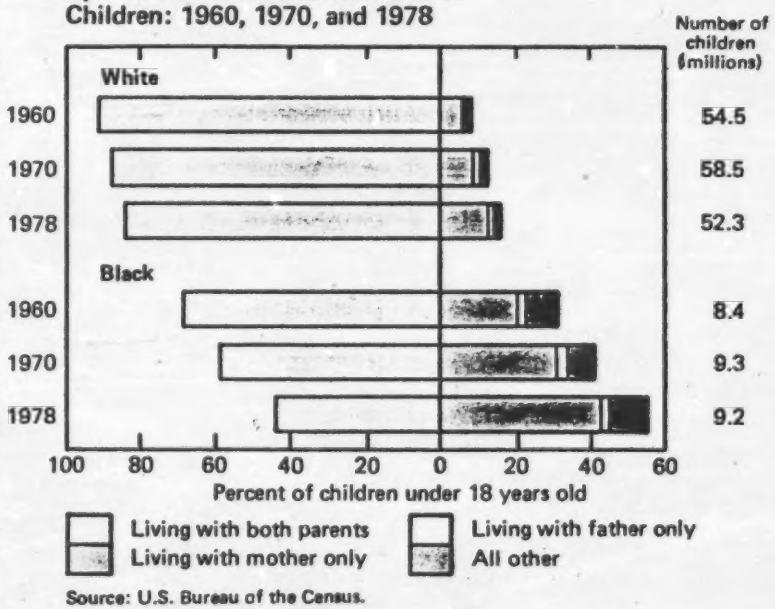



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**About the same number of Black children live with one parent as live with two parents.**

In 1978, 45 percent of Black children under 18 lived with one parent and 44 percent lived with two parents; corresponding figures for White children were 14 percent and 84 percent, respectively. For both groups, the proportion living with one parent doubled from 1960 to 1978. One of every ten children living with one parent lived with the father.

Chart 17.
**Children Under 18 Years Old in Families, by Presence of Parents and Race of Children: 1960, 1970, and 1978**

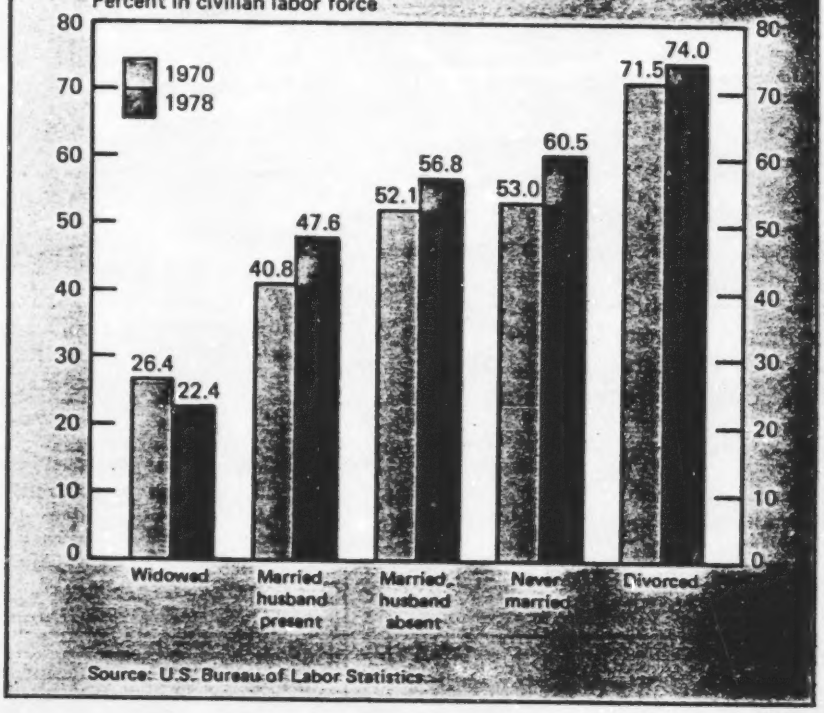



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Labor force participation rates among women continue to be highest among the divorced.**

Three of every four divorced women are in the labor force, compared with one of every two married women. Since almost nine-tenths of widows are 65 years old or older, only one-fifth of the 10.1 million widows are in the labor force. Rates of employment increased most in the 1970's for married women and never-married women.

Chart 18.
**Labor Force Participation Rates of Women, by Marital Status: 1970 and 1978**

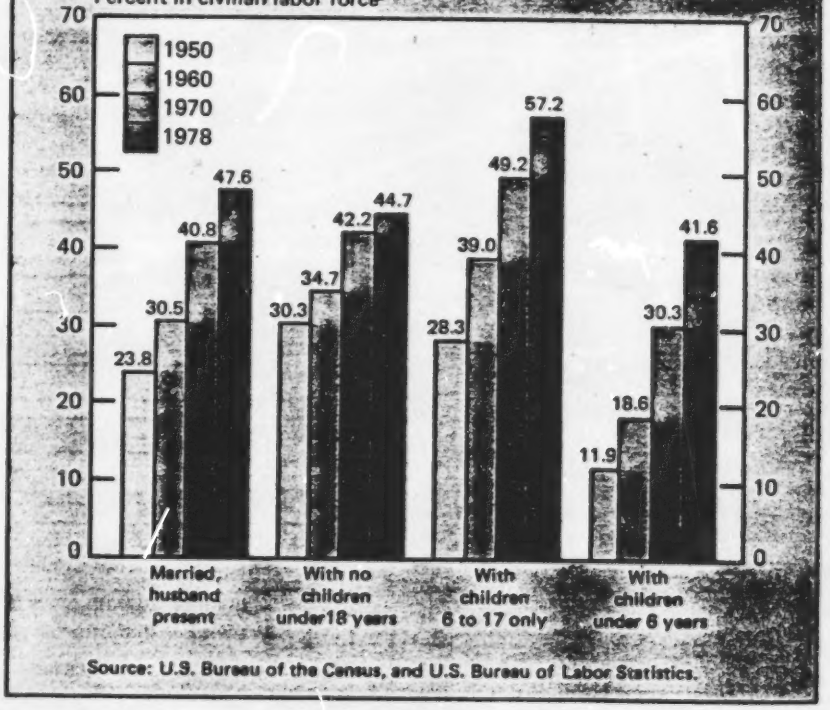



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**Labor force participation rates have increased most rapidly for married women with children of preschool age.**

Between 1950 and 1978, the labor force participation rate more than tripled for married mothers of preschoolers, doubled for those with school-age children only, and increased by one-half for those with no young children. Most of the increase since 1950 occurred from 1960 to 1978 as the birth rate declined and the level of education of women increased sharply.

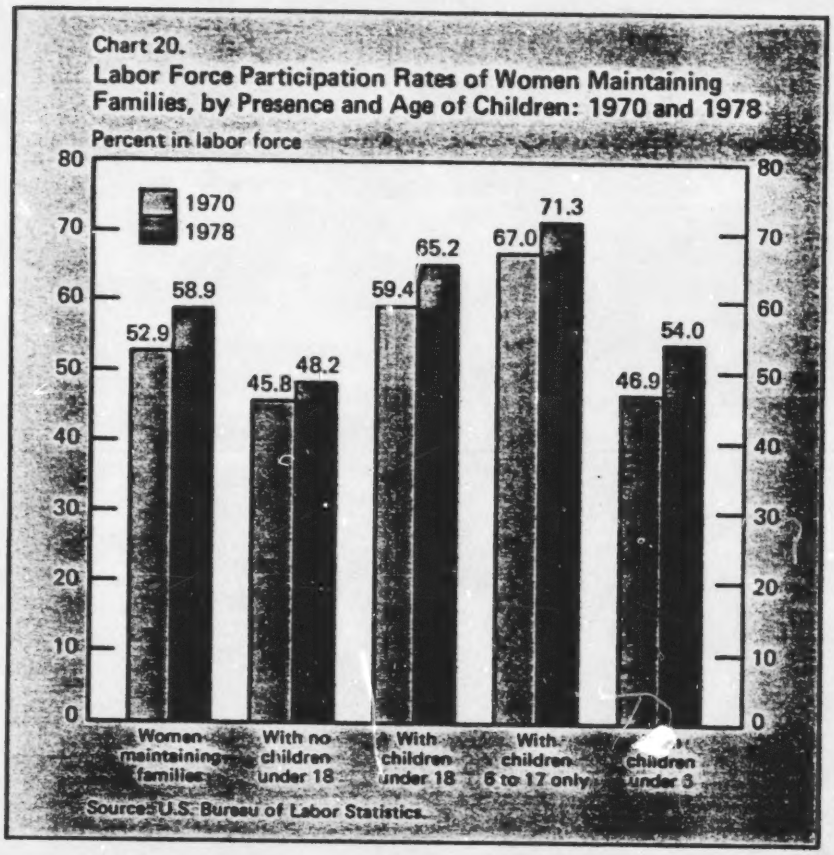
Chart 19.
**Labor Force Participation Rates of Married Women With Husband Present, by Presence and Age of Children: 1950-78**




Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**One-half of the lone mothers of preschoolers are in the labor force.**

The pattern of worker rates by presence and age of children for women maintaining families with no husband in the home is, as expected, uniformly higher than that for married women living with their husbands.




**Almost nine-tenths of children 3 to 13 years old are provided day care in their own homes.**

Most children are provided daytime care by their own parents if their mother is not in the labor force, while three-fifths of those with their mother in the labor force receive daytime care from their parents. Most of the children of working mothers are of school age.

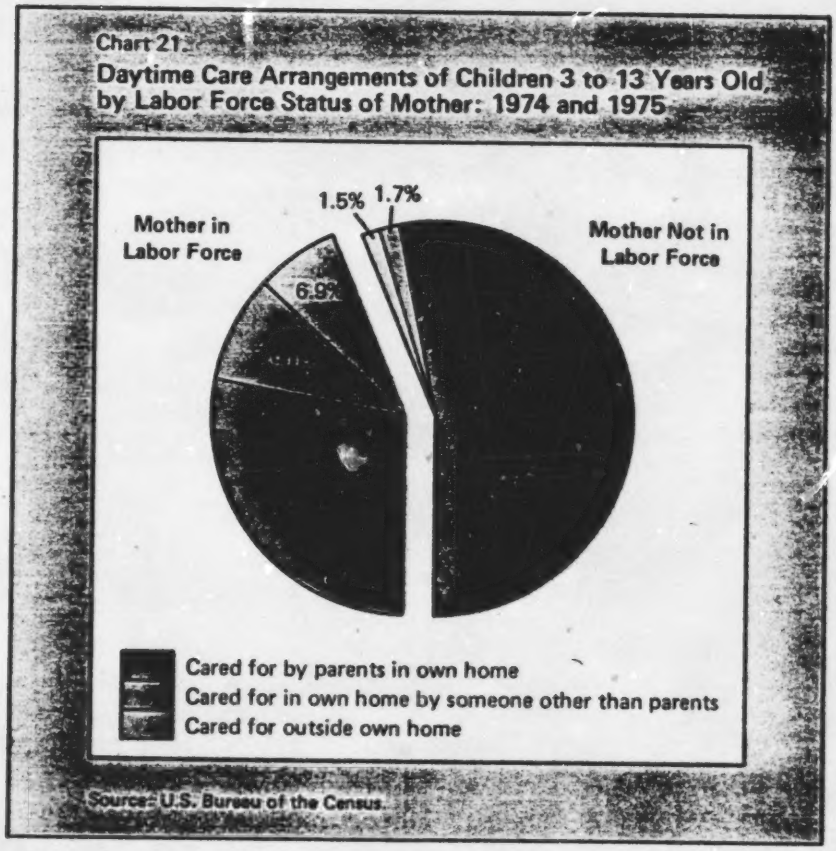
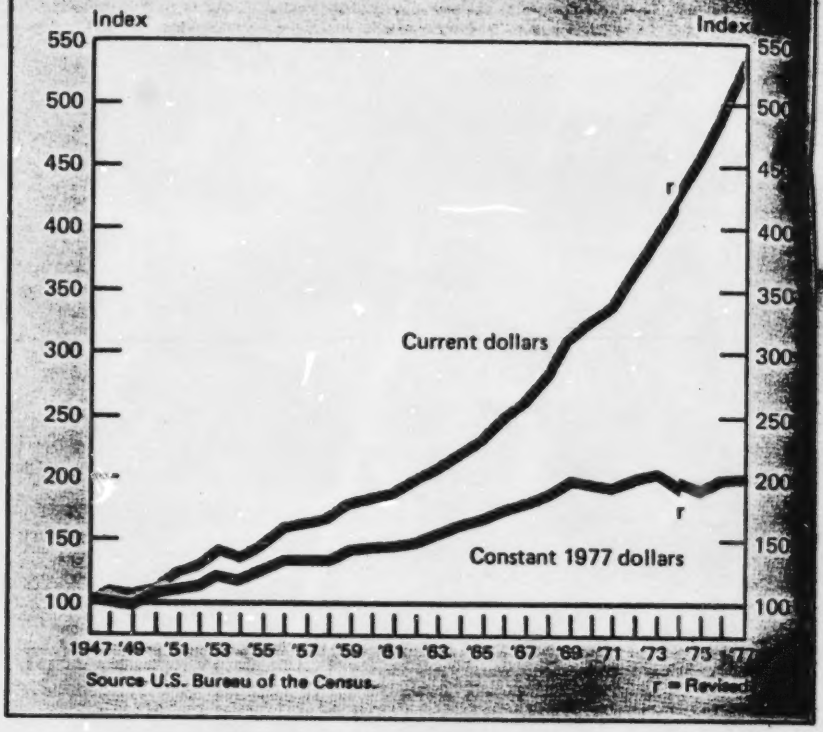


Chart 21.
Daytime Care Arrangements of Children 3 to 13 Years Old, by Labor Force Status of Mother: 1974 and 1975
Mother in Labor Force
1.5%
1.7%
Mother Not in Labor Force
6.9%
Cared for by parents in own home
Cared for in own home by someone other than parents
Cared for outside own home
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Family income, adjusted for inflation, rose by one-third during the 1960's but rose little during the 1970's.**

In terms of current dollars, family income rose by three-fifths during the 1970's, from nearly $10,000 in 1970 to $16,000 in 1977. Black families had a median income in 1977 of $9,600, or 57 percent of that for White families, which was $16,700. For families of Spanish origin, the median was $11,400, or 68 percent of that for White families.

Chart 22.
**Index of Median Family Income in Current and Constant Dollars: 1947-77**

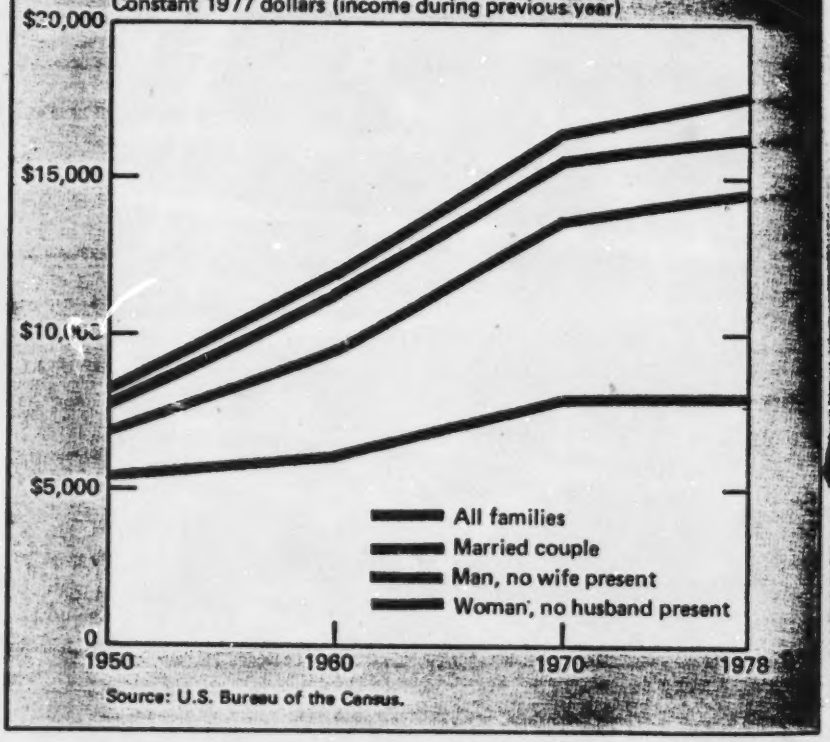



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. r = Revised

**Income of married-couple families increased most.**

As more young wives entered the paid labor force, the median income of married-couple families rose by about one-tenth (in dollars of constant value) from 1970 to 1978. So, the median income of these families continued to be more than twice as high as that for families maintained by a lone woman.

Chart 23.
**Median Family Income, by Type of Family: 1950-78**

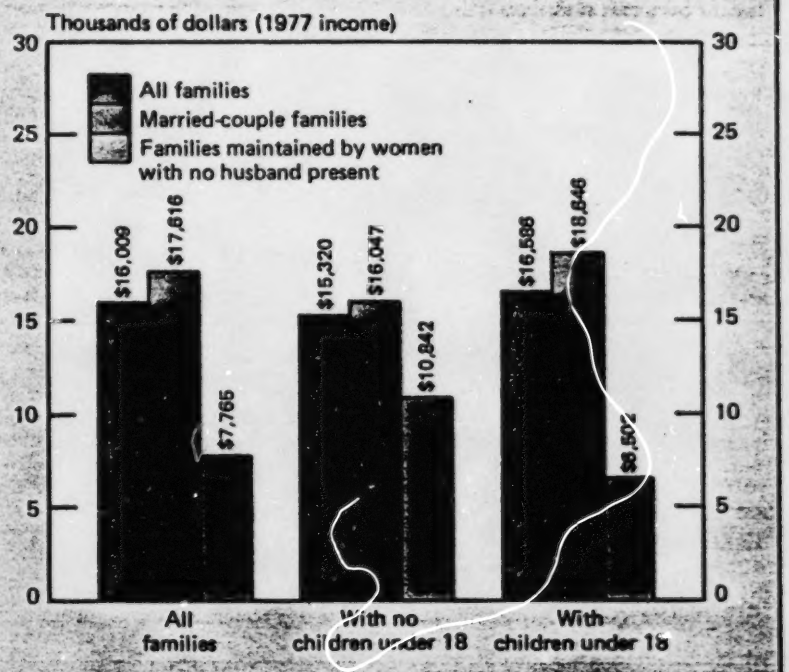



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Married-couple families with children in the home have the highest median income.**

These families had nearly three times as much income in 1977, on the average, as families maintained by lone mothers ($18,600 versus $6,500). Families maintained by women seldom have two or more earners, and a relatively large proportion of these families is maintained by Black women or by women who were not high school graduates.

Chart 24.
**Median Family Income, by Presence of Children and Type of Family: 1978**

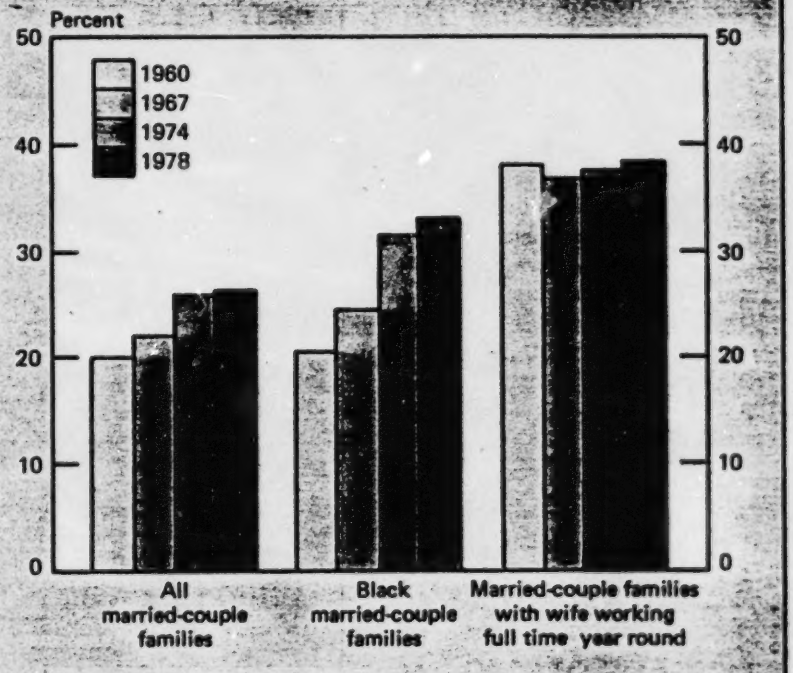



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**More of the family income is being earned by the wife.**

Between 1960 and 1978, the proportion of income of married-couple families earned by the wife rose from 20 percent to 26 percent. The increase for Black families was especially large, but the change was very small for families with the wife working full time year round.

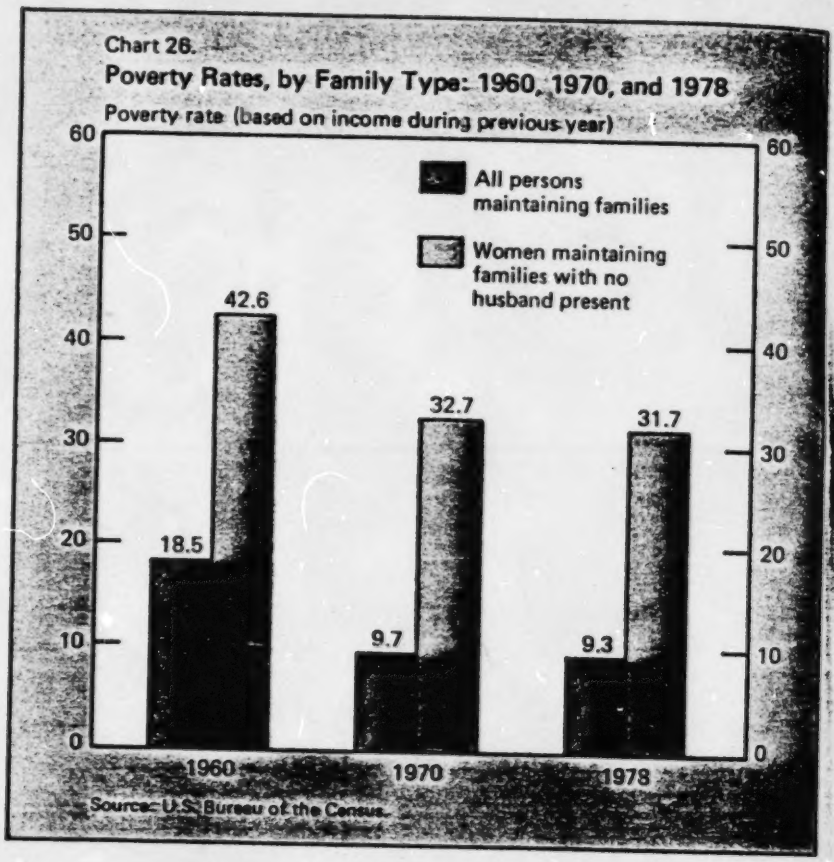
Chart 25.
**Percent of Family Income Earned by the Wife: 1960-78**
(Income during previous year)




Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

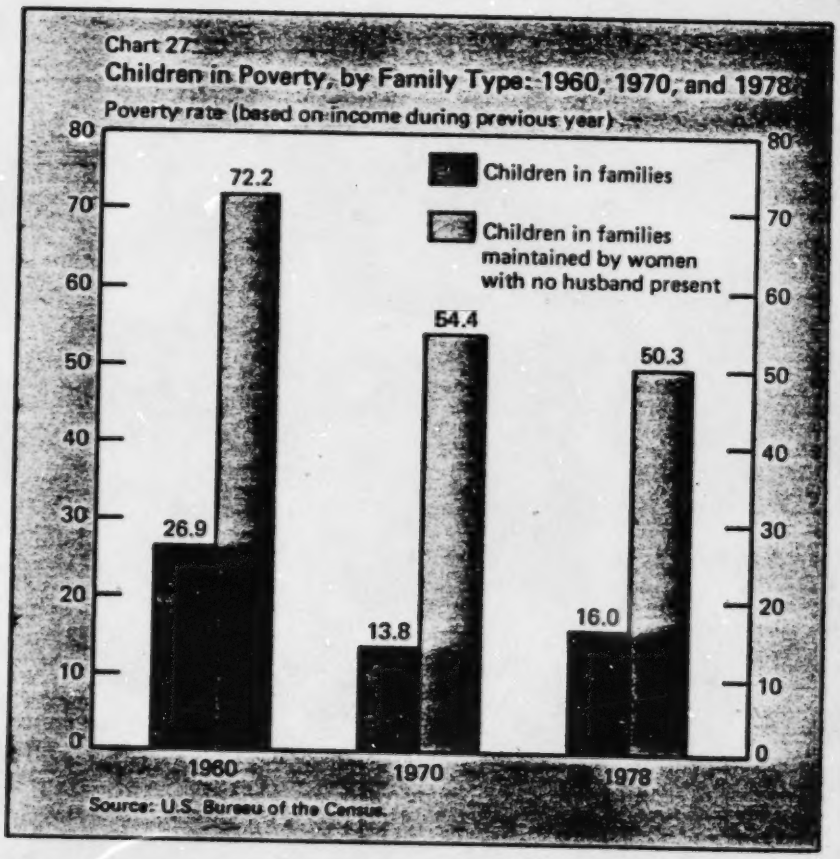
**The poverty rate for families dropped by one-half during the 1960's but changed little during the 1970's.**

The poverty rate for families was 19 percent in 1960, 10 percent in 1970, and 9 percent in 1978. For families maintained by women, the rate of decline was slower: the corresponding figures being 43 percent, 33 percent, and 32 percent.



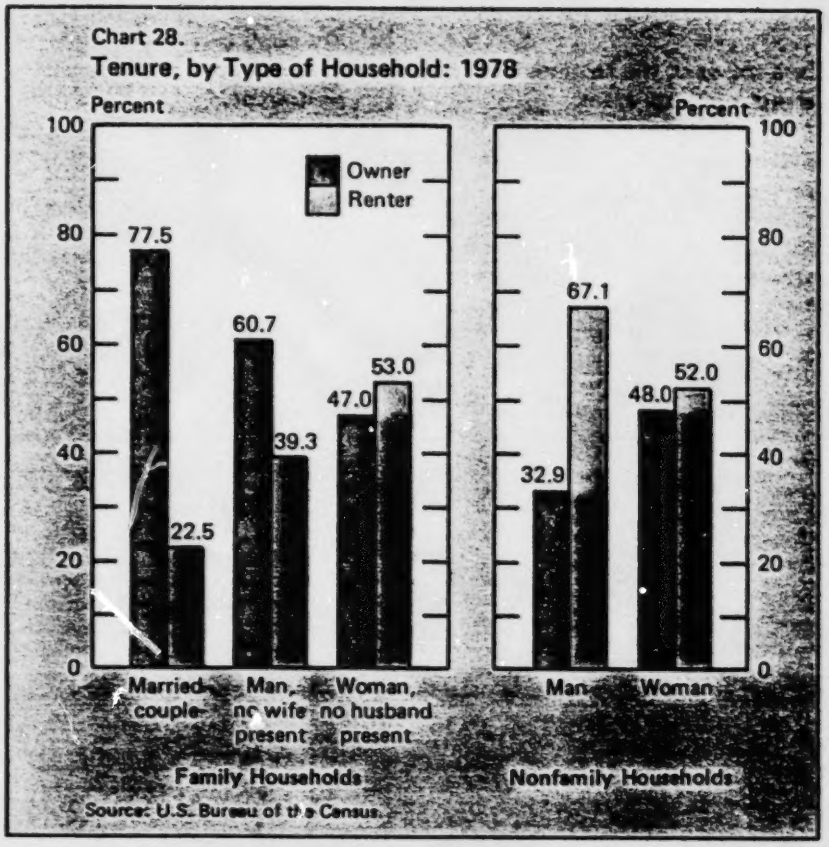

**The poverty rate for children dropped by one-half during the 1960's but rose during the 1970's.**

In 1960, 27 percent of the children under 18 lived in poverty, compared with 14 percent in 1970 and 16 percent in 1978. Partly through expanded Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the poverty rate among children living only with their mothers declined from 72 percent in 1960 to 50 percent in 1978.



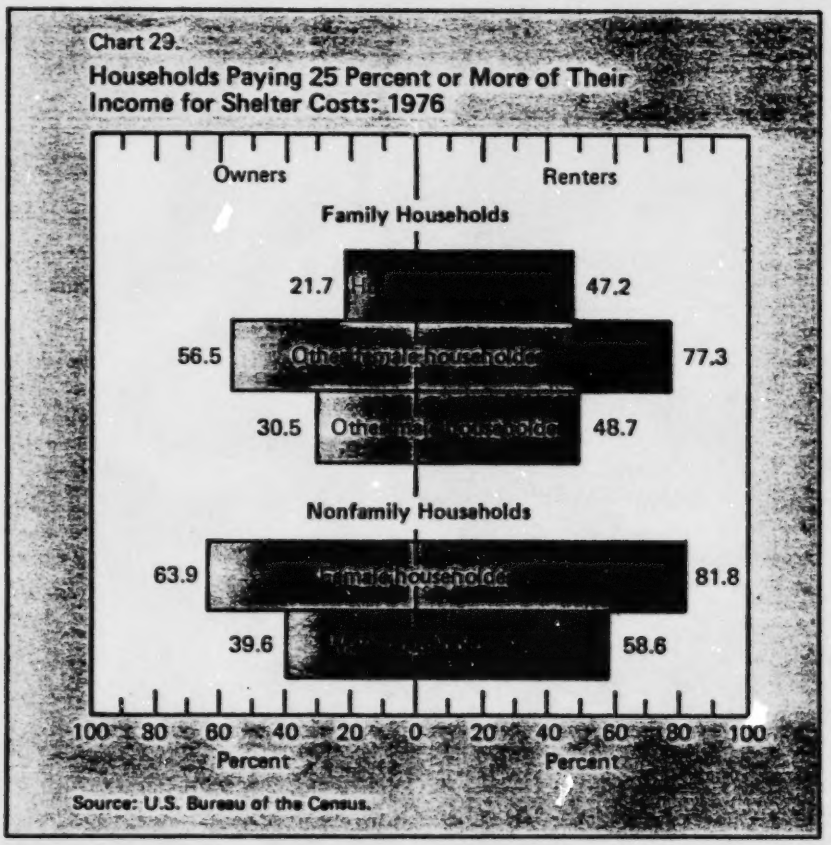
**Over three-fourths of all married couples are homeowners.**

In 1978, 78 percent of the married-couple households were homeowners, compared with 47 percent of the family households maintained by women with no husband present.




**A variable proportion of households pay one-fourth or more of their income for shelter.**

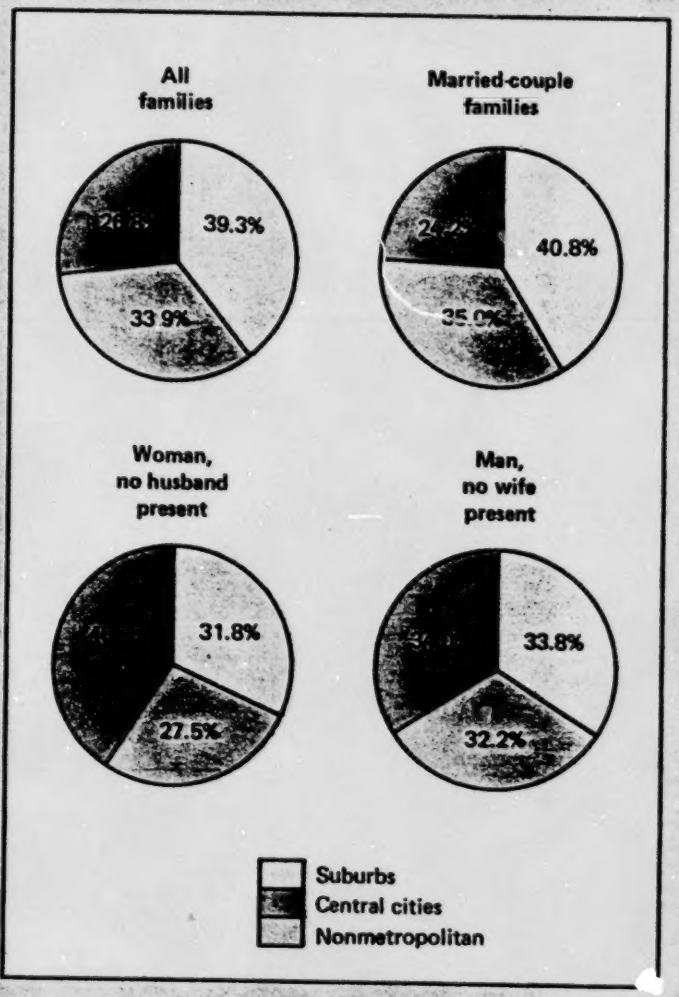
Only 22 percent of married-couple homeowners pay one-fourth or more of their income for shelter, compared with 82 percent of female renters with no relatives present.



**Two-thirds of the families live in metropolitan areas.**

Married-couple families constitute the largest proportion living in metropolitan suburbs (41 percent), but families maintained by women with no husband present constitute the largest proportion living in central cities of metropolitan areas (41 percent).

Chart 30.
Metropolitan-Nonmetropolitan Residence of Families: 1978




Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.